

From the Editor...

Dear Readers,

We are with you again with the Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences Journal of Special Education's last issue, March 2023, Volume 24, Issue 1. As always has been, I would like to thank here those who contributed as our authors, reviewers, readers, our Academic Advisory Board, and our Editorial Board. I would like to indicate that as the Editorial Board, we put forth the effort to move our journal to a higher level both quantitatively and qualitatively in the forthcoming process.

In this issue of our Journal, there are ten research articles. I would like to briefly introduce them to our readers. The first research article in the current issue includes a study of *Derya KASAP-ERDAL*, *Gönül YAZGAN-SAĞ*, and *Ziya ARGÜN* namely "*Examination of Teaching Practices in Inclusive Classrooms: The Case of Middle School Mathematics Teachers.*" The aim of this study was to examine in detail how middle school mathematics teachers who have students with special learning disabilities in their classrooms apply their teaching practices and adaptations as well as to demonstrate how they carry out these activities. This qualitative research, that is among case study designs, was designed as an embedded multi-case study research. Three math teachers who teach mathematics in a sixth-grade inclusion class participated in the study. The study's data were collected by using demographic data forms, interview forms, and observation forms created by the researchers. Descriptive analysis, one of the analysis techniques used in qualitative research, was used to examine the raw data. The results of the study revealed that math teachers used a variety of teaching strategies and adaptations in relation to the curriculum, instructional strategies, instructional materials, teaching groups, instructional homework, the development of learning skills, the improvement of behavior, and the facilitation of the monitoring of progress (evaluation). The authors recommended that due consideration should be given to all practices and modifications in the teaching process, aside from those that are related to the curriculum and evaluation.

The second study namely "*The Effectiveness of the Activity Package Based on Direct Instruction Method in Developing the Number Sense of Children with Intellectual Disabilities*" was conducted by *Büşra YILMAZ-YENİOĞLU* and *Mine SÖNMEZ-KARTAL*. In this study, the effectiveness of the activity package based on the direct instruction method in developing and maintaining the sense of the number of three participants aged 8-12 with mild intellectual disability was examined. It was also examined whether the participants could generalize their acquired skills to Panamath practice. In the study, a multiple probe design with probe conditions across participants, which is one of the single-subject research models, was used. The findings showed that all participants developed their sense of the number and were able to maintain this skill. Also, it showed that individuals from different age groups could generalize to Panamath, a software used to determine number sense. The social validity findings collected from the teachers of the participants also showed that number sense was an important skill for the participants. In addition, the teachers stated that the participants used their number sense skills in their daily lives as well.

The third research article in this issue is authored by *Gülşah AVCI-DOĞAN* and *Nazmiye Nazlı ATEŞGÖZ* namely "*The Status of Gifted Students During Covid-19 Pandemic Process.*" This study aimed to reveal the situation of gifted students during the Covid-19 epidemic from the perspectives of students, teachers, and parents. Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. For all the data collected within the scope of the research, content analysis was performed with an inductive approach. This study was designed as a case study, one of the qualitative research methods. The participants consisted of five students who were identified as gifted, five parents with gifted children, and five teachers working in the field of education of the gifted. The data were evaluated under three headings, including the themes of making sense, shaping life (academic and social), and future plans. Under the theme of making sense, the experiences of the gifted in understanding and adapting the process were examined. Under the theme of shaping life, students' status of continuing their education and their sharing about their social lives were evaluated. Lifestyles that the pandemic process brought and the student plans for the future were examined. Research findings showed that gifted students can use their skills to turn the crisis that emerged with the pandemic into an opportunity. Moreover, the findings support the necessity of differentiating education programs for gifted students.

Banu ALTUNAY, *Menekşe UYSAL-SARAÇ*, and *Şener BÜYÜKÖZTÜRK* authored the fourth research article namely "*Developing Orientation and Mobility Skills Assessment Tool and Determining the Cut-off Scores of the Scales.*" The aim of this study was to develop an Orientation and Mobility Skills Checklist (OMSC) for visually impaired students at primary and secondary school levels and to determine the cut-off scores. The OMSC consists of two independent checklists. In the process of the OMSC development, the psychometric properties of the tool were determined by applying it to all tactile students studying in primary and secondary schools in a province. The findings on the validity and reliability of the OMSC showed that it was suitable to be used as a measurement tool to determine orientation and mobility skills. The Orientation Skills (OS) checklist is a single-factor structure of 6 items. On the other hand, the Mobility Skills (MS) checklist has a 19-item, 3-factor structure.

After the tool was developed, identifying the norm values was aimed by determining the percentiles so that the scores could be interpreted. With this aim, the OMSC was applied to a total of 402 students who were studying in separate educational environments opened for visually impaired students and to students who were continuing their inclusive education in the regions close to these schools in Turkey. However, since the scores obtained aggregated in low scores, the cut-off scores were determined with the Angoff method based on expert opinion. After the implementation, the psychometric features of the OMSC were re-examined. The descriptive statistics of the scores obtained revealed that 70.1% of the students received zero points from the MS control checklist. OS scores did not deviate excessively from the normal distribution. The construct validity and reliability of the checklists were examined, and the cut-off scores for minimum competency levels for the OS and MS checklists were determined as 2 and 6 points, respectively. The authors suggested that the OMSC can be used to assess students, determine the progress of students studying at different educational institutions, and direct them to appropriate training in line with their needs.

The fifth article which was conducted by *Emine ÖZMETE* and *Melike PAK* is namely “*Experiences of Mothers with Disabled Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic.*” This study aimed to examine the experiences of mothers, who have the burden of care in families with disabled children, during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with mothers of children with disabilities ($n = 14$) using the phenomenological method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. In the data analysis, Miles and Huberman model was followed, and the codes and categories reflecting the investigated phenomenon were determined by using continuous comparison and phenomenological reduction methods. According to the results of the study, the difficulties of the mothers' lives increased during the pandemic, and the perception of restrictions resulting from the measures against the pandemic, as well as the inadequacy of access to services, led to increased concern among mothers. The limited support for children with disabilities and their families, as well as their inability to meet their needs with their resources, caused mothers to feel exhausted. In addition to the difficulties they experienced, mothers stated that they had positive experiences as well since they could spend more productive time with their family members, use digital resources, and feel stronger at the end of the process. Compelling experiences such as anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, fatigue, and restraint among mothers with disabled children show that these mothers are among the vulnerable individuals adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the pandemic period was challenging, mothers gained resilience in coping with the difficulties and adapted to the situation. Based on the experiences of families with disabled members for possible future pandemics, services should be provided to facilitate family crisis management, education, advocacy, psychosocial counseling, and empowerment-based studies.

The sixth research article namely “*Effectiveness of the Family Education Program on Protection from Neglect and Abuse Offered to Families with Children with Disabilities*” authored by *Sevgi YILDIRIM* and *Zehra ATBAŞI*. This study was conducted to test the effectiveness of a family education program on the prevention of neglect and abuse, which was offered to families with children with disabilities, on the knowledge levels of families about neglect and abuse. In the study, a family education booklet prepared by the researchers regarding the prevention of neglect and abuse in the training process was used. The content of the family education booklet was organized into presentations and was presented in five sessions. This research was carried out using a mixed methods approach in which both quantitative and qualitative findings were used. In the study, a pretest-post-test experimental design with experimental and control groups was used to collect the quantitative data. The same tests were applied to the experimental group three weeks after the training, and monitoring data were obtained. In addition, an interview form consisting of four questions prepared by the researcher was applied to the experimental group immediately after the training, and the opinions of the families about the education were captured. The quantitative data of the research were analyzed using a statistical software program. The research was conducted with a total of 40 parents with children with disabilities, with 20 participants in the experimental group and 20 participants in the control group. It was observed that the family education program on protection from neglect and abuse offered to families with children with disabilities was effective in increasing the level of knowledge of families on neglect and abuse. From the findings of this study, it was concluded that the effectiveness of the family education program, which was also presented in the follow-up tests applied to the families three weeks later, was preserved. While the families had a low level of knowledge about neglect and abuse before the training, there was an increase in their knowledge level after the training. The authors thought that if families are informed about this issue, they will be wiser about their children's protection from neglect and abuse, and therefore, this study will serve the purpose of assisting to prevent neglect and abuse.

The article namely “*The Effect of a Differentiated Problem-Based Science Program on Gifted Students' Cooperative Working Skills and Problem-solving Skills*” was authored by *Özge CEYLAN* and *Ünsal UMDU-TOPSAKAL*, is the seventh research article of this issue. This study aimed to develop gifted middle-school students' problem-solving and cooperative working skills through a differentiated science program based on problem-solving. The study was designed as an action research study. The participants were 12 seventh-grade (11-12 years old) gifted students and a researcher who was also a teacher. The researchers prepared the problem-based

differentiated science teaching module and applied it to the participants for 14 weeks. Qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were used in the study. The Problem-solving Skills Questionnaire and student diaries were used to reveal the development of problem-solving. The Cooperative Process Scale and student diaries were used to reveal the development of cooperative working skills. Descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test were used to analyze quantitative data, and thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The qualitative and quantitative findings of the study showed that the problem-based differentiated science teaching module improved the gifted students' cooperative working and problem-solving skills. This study suggests that the differentiated science program was effective in the development of the gifted students' cooperative working and problem-solving skills. In future studies, it was recommended that differentiated programs be prepared with different subject contents and that their effectiveness be investigated.

The eighth research article in this issue with the title of “*Investigation of Diagnosis, Evaluation, and Monitoring Processes in Guidance and Research Centers: The Case of Children with Hearing Loss*” was authored by Yunus YILMAZ and Murat DOĞAN. The study aimed to reveal the function of diagnosis, evaluation, and monitoring processes in the Guidance Research Center (GRC) on children with hearing loss. In addition, it examined whether there was a difference between the applications of GRCs and the reasons for possible differences. The study was designed as a descriptive case study, including semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and reflective diaries for the researcher's observation. The research data collection process was carried out in GRCs in two districts of a medium-sized Central Anatolian city. 13 teachers from two GRCs participated in the research. The data analysis showed that the findings pointing to the functioning of GRC processes were grouped under seven themes: Opinions on diagnosis, evaluation, referral, placement, monitoring process, individualized education program (IEP) and report renewal, problems experienced in GRC processes, and suggestions for GRC processes. The prominent findings can be exemplified by the lack of cooperation between the hospital and the GRC, the inadequacy of the evaluation forms, the lack of materials, the failure to provide the physical conditions suitable for the evaluation, and the attempt to monitor with annual reports. The function of diagnosis, evaluation, orientation, placement, and monitoring processes and the problems experienced in these processes were compared with previous literature.

The article namely “*An Investigation of the Educational Problems of Gifted Children in the Preschool Period According to the Perspectives of Mothers*” that was authored by Fatma Betül ŞENOL, is the ninth research article of this issue. The aim of the study was to determine the problems experienced by gifted children in the preschool period. For this purpose, the effects of informing mothers about the development of their gifted children in the preschool period, the educational problems experienced by the children in preschool education institutions, and the expectations of mothers from preschool education were examined in line with the perceptions of the mothers. The study was planned in a phenomenological pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. The study group consisted of 75 mothers with gifted children determined through the criterion sampling method. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and were analyzed with the content analysis technique. The results showed that preschool teachers gave information to families about their children's different developmental characteristics, learning skills, giftedness, and creativity. The educational problems experienced by gifted children in the preschool period were grouped under the themes of the activity applied, the materials used, the teacher, peer interaction, and the school. The expectations of mothers from preschool education were gathered under the themes of activity, teacher, educational environment, social-emotional development, and early identification. Since most of the gifted children were noticed in the preschool period by their teachers who did not make adequate interventions, educational problems arose. The expectation of families from preschool education was that their educational problems are solved. The author suggested that educational measures should be taken to maximize the potential of these children and minimize the problems they experience.

The tenth and last research article in this issue with the title of “*Examination of Movies About Gifted Individuals*” was authored Seda Nur ŞAKAR, Zeynep YAZGI-YANIK, Merve AVCI, Ahmet GÖNCÜ, Sunay BULGURCU, and Seray OLÇAY. The objective of this study was to reveal how gifted characters are presented in films about gifted individuals. The characteristics of characters in demographic and different developmental domains (cognitive, personality, social-emotional, and language) were evaluated by examining 36 films about gifted individuals. Films with a gifted individual in the lead role were included in the study. The 36 films reached by meeting this criterion constitute the research objects of the study. The data of the study, designed with the case study method, were collected by document analysis and analyzed by the descriptive analysis method. A checklist including demographic characteristics and cognitive, social-emotional, language, and personality development characteristics of gifted individuals prepared by the researchers based on the literature was used to analyze the films reached. The characteristics of gifted characters were examined by considering the checklist. According to the research findings, gifted characters were usually depicted as males in the examined films, and some characters had various diagnoses accompanying their special abilities. Concerning developmental domains, the following dimensions were observed to come to the forefront: strong memory in the domain of cognitive development, self-awareness in the domain of social-emotional development, using the language correctly and fluently in the domain

of language development, and self-discipline in the domain of personality development. It was suggested that observed that the characteristics of gifted characters are usually reflected in films in a way overlapping with the literature. In this context, the authors recommended that films about gifted individuals should be shot in Turkey by taking the opinions of experts working in the field of gifted education.

I would like to kindly thank once again my colleagues for their vigorous efforts who are working with me on the Editorial Board for our journal to be published timely and to increase quality. I would like to thank our dear readers, authors, and reviewers for their support and contributions once again and I would like to kindly request you to continue your support and contributions during the ongoing process. I wish to be with you again in the second issue of the 24th volume which will be published in June 2023...

Prof. Hatice BAKKALOĞLU